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Vint Cerf Speaking Out on Internet Neutrality

Nov 10, 2005 11:27 AM PDT | Comments: 0 | Views: 15,660

By [CircleID Reporter](#)

In a U.S. congress hearing [held yesterday](#) November 9th, significant focus was projected on "network neutrality" and a new telecommunications bill affecting the Internet. "This bill could fundamentally alter the fabulously successful end-to-end Internet," says Alan Davidson [in the post](#) on Google blog.

Vint Cerf was not able to testify because of the [Presidential Medal of Freedom](#) award ceremony at the White House, but submitted the following letter to the hearing:

Dear Chairman Barton and Ranking Member Dingell,

I appreciate the inquiries by your staff about my availability to appear before the Committee and to share Google's views about draft telecommunications legislation and the issues related to "network neutrality." These are matters of great importance to the Internet and Google welcomes the Committee's hard work and attention. The hearing unfortunately conflicts with another obligation, and I am sorry I will not be able to attend. (Along with my colleague Robert Kahn, I am honored to be receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom on Wednesday at the White House for our work in creating the Internet protocol TCP/IP.)

Despite my inability to participate in the planned hearing in person, I hope that you will accept some brief observations about this legislation.

The remarkable social impact and economic success of the Internet is in many ways directly attributable to the architectural characteristics that were part of its design. The Internet was designed with no gatekeepers over new content or services. The Internet is based on a layered, end-to-end model that allows people at each level of the network to innovate free of any central control. By placing intelligence at the edges rather than control in the middle of the network, the Internet has created a platform for innovation. This has led to an explosion of offerings – from VOIP to 802.11x wi-fi to blogging – that might never have evolved had central control of the network been required by design.

My fear is that, as written, this bill would do great damage to the Internet as we know it. Enshrining a rule that broadly permits network operators to discriminate in favor of certain kinds of services and to potentially interfere with others would place broadband operators in control of online activity. Allowing broadband providers to segment their IP offerings and reserve huge amounts of bandwidth for their own services will not give consumers the broadband Internet our country and economy need. Many people will have little or no choice among broadband operators for the foreseeable future, implying that such operators will have the power to exercise a great deal of control over any applications placed on the network.

As we move to a broadband environment and eliminate century-old non-discrimination requirements, a lightweight but enforceable neutrality rule is needed to ensure that the Internet continues to thrive. Telephone companies cannot tell consumers who they can call; network operators should not dictate what people can do online.

I am confident that we can build a broadband system that allows users to decide what websites they want to see and what applications they want to use – and that also guarantees high quality service and network security. That network model has and can continue to provide economic benefits to innovators and

consumers—and to the broadband operators who will reap the rewards for providing access to such a valued network.

We appreciate the efforts in your current draft to create at least a starting point for net neutrality principles. Google looks forward to working with you and your staff to draft a bill that will maintain the revolutionary potential of the broadband Internet.

Thank you for your attention and for your efforts on these important issues.

Sincerely,

Vinton Cerf
Chief Internet Evangelist
Google Inc.

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